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Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, District of Columbia

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

In the Matter of)
)
Closed Captioning and)
Video Description)
Of Video Programming)
)

MM Docket No.
95-176

NOTICE OF INQUIRY

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**COMMENTS OF ATLANTA HEARS CHAPTER/ S.H.H.H.
IN THE NOTICE OF INQUIRY REGARDING CLOSED CAPTIONING
AND VIDEO DESCRIPTION**

To The Commission:

ATLANTA HEARS/ S.H.H.H. (chapter of Self Help for Hard of Hearing People) is writing in response to your request for comments in the "Notice of Inquiry," FCC 95-484, in the above-captioned proceeding, released December 4, 1995.

The Commission seeks to assess the current availability, cost, and uses of closed captioning and video description, and to assess what further Commission actions may be appropriate to promote these services. It also seeks comments on the appropriate means of promoting the services of wider use in programming delivered by television broadcasters, cable operators, and other video programming providers.

Atlanta Hears/ S.H.H.H., which is located in Atlanta, Georgia, is a non-profit organization under the umbrella of the National Chapter of Self Help for Hard of Hearing People. Atlanta Hears/ S.H.H.H.'s function is to provide a conduit of information and network for persons with hearing loss or family members of persons with impaired hearing. Our organization offers public and free education programs to the metropolitan Atlanta area, for individuals and families who are concerned with the issues of hearing loss.

The greater majority of our organization's members find that captions are essential to understanding material on television and videos. We are in agreement that we are pleased with the increasing availability of closed-captions in our programs and videotapes. We would like to provide our comments to the inquiry. They are as follows, with response to the specific numbered paragraphs:

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PARAGRAPH 11:

In the situations of hurricane, tornado, and environmental warnings, a preparation for shelter is necessary. Some critical live weather reports can not be captioned for some reason. Some captioning services do not caption ad-libbed weather reports, but rather from a script typed prior to the broadcast. The live captions watched on all the three local stations in Washington D.C. area during the blizzards of 1996 were extremely helpful to one former member of Atlanta Hears. The captions enabled her to find out additional information she would have missed previously.

PARAGRAPH 12:

In noisy restaurants and airport terminals, it is helpful to find television screens with closed captioning turned on. Many of us have trouble listening to people speaking when the background noise is at a premium. We agree that it wasn't the intention of bars or restaurants to put a television with the caption chip built in for us but for everyone. It is appreciated by other viewers in the vicinity of the noisy environment.

PARAGRAPH 14:

From the mid-1980's to the late-1990's, we saw an increased level of closed-captioning available and hope it remains this way. We don't think it's reached a plateau, but certainly needs some work. The source of the program affects whether it is captioned or not. For instance, many older videotapes and public service tapes are not currently available in caption format in video outlets or public libraries. Many public service tapes currently available do not have captions. The tapes on travel destinations, exercise workouts, pregnancy/ health care are often not captioned. At Blockbusters' free public service tape rental area, one will find that a tape on hearing loss presented with actor Richard Dysart is not captioned. When we find such tapes are not captioned, we do not purchase or rent them. Since we are not able to learn from such videotapes, we have to educate ourselves through other mediums and sometimes that can be difficult.

We also question the occurrence of a lack of captions in some programs supposedly captioned. For instance, some programs maybe broadcasting the caption signals in one city and not in another. This has happened to during the "Jeopardy" broadcasts in Atlanta while it is being broadcasted with captions Nashville and Washington, D.C.. We are not sure if is a signal defect or if the local broadcaster is not captioning it.

It would be beneficial if the local television stations and/ or the national television networks would post a telephone number where they can reach if they are having

problems with the caption signals. It is difficult for the broadcasters to monitor the problems without having some form of consumer input.

PARAGRAPH 33:

Our members have experienced in numerous incidents, scrambled caption signals that are unreadable or partially scripted while the signal for the program is transmitting without any problem. This occurs everyday and everywhere. We have found that on cable television, all broadcast stations would show movies and regular television programs with scrambled captions containing unreadable combinations of numbers and letters and on other days it is transmitting without error. This has just recently occurred to one of our members who was watching a movie on HBO in Louisville, Kentucky. One such movie, "Curly Sue," appeared on subsequent days- one day with clear, error-free captions and then the next day it appeared with scrambled captions.

Last, but not least of all, we have oftentimes found that people responsible for typing or editing text in the pre-programmed programs do in fact edit words to their benefit. We find this detrimental to the real effort of captioning. The replacement of words with other words in similar meaning in order to "shorten" the text is disturbing. We do not think it is the proper role of the captioning service. They should be responsible for getting every word as the screenwriter or playwright has written the language.

Young adults, students, parents, and retired people all reflect our diverse membership. Closed-captioning services are needed by a wide range of people from the young to the elderly, from urban dwellers to persons who live in remote areas. Captions open doors to many of us with hearing loss. We appreciate having the opportunity to present comments on behalf of Atlanta Hears/ S.H.H.H.. Thank you.

Respectfully yours,


Regina Greco,

Representative for Atlanta Hears Chapter

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